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Thursday, 4 April 2002, 11.50 a.m.

New York

President:	Mr. Lavrov	(Russian Federation)
Members:	Bulgaria	Mr. Katzarski
	Cameroon	Mrs. Mahouve Same
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Colombia	Mr. Valdivieso
	France	Mr. Levitte
	Guinea	Mr. Fall
	Ireland	Mr. Ryan
	Mauritius	Mr. Jingree
	Mexico	Ms. Lajous
	Norway	Mr. Kolby
	Singapore	Mr. Yap
	Syrian Arab Republic	Mr. Wehbe
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Eldon
	United States of America	Mr. Williamson

Agenda

Food aid in the context of conflict settlement: Afghanistan and other crisis areas

Briefing by Ms. Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the World Food Programme

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02-31542 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 11.50 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Food aid in the context of conflict settlement: Afghanistan and other crisis areas

Briefing by Ms. Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the World Food Programme

The President (*spoke in Russian*): In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Ms. Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the World Food Programme.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Ms. Bertini to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

I invite the members of the Council to hear a briefing by the Executive Director of the World Food Programme, Ms. Catherine Bertini. I now give the floor to Ms. Bertini.

Ms. Bertini: I would like to thank you very much, Mr. President, and the Council for this invitation to be here, as I complete my 10-year term, on what is actually my last day with the World Food Programme (WFP). It is certainly a highlighted way to end my term, being invited to join you today to talk about this important issue.

Over 10 years ago, at the World Summit for Children, Governments agreed to many goals, and agreed to work towards them for the year 2000. One of those goals included a commitment to implement "measures to eradicate hunger, malnutrition and famine". I believe that the international community has achieved a part of that goal, that is, the eradication of famine. Hunger and malnutrition remain with us, and sometimes there will be localized severe shortages of food. But I absolutely believe that we have put an end to major famines like the one that claimed so many lives in Ethiopia in the middle 1980s.

The international community has achieved this together despite the fact that in the last decade there has been a rising tide of emergencies, both natural and man-made, far more than could ever have been anticipated — a drought in southern Africa in 1992, the devastation wrought by hurricane Mitch in Central America, the ethnic conflicts in Kosovo and East Timor, severe food shortages in North Korea and the intractable conflicts in Angola, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Sudan and West Africa, as well as many more crises. Many of those could have brought on famine, but I believe that we successfully achieved the objective that they did not.

Afghanistan is the most recent example of how the international community has successfully prevented famine. We now have early-warning systems, information and transport technology and political commitment to ensure that famine never happens again.

Food aid has become a critical part of humanitarian interventions, starting with survival in the case of emergencies. Food is one of the first needs in almost every humanitarian crisis, and food aid plays a major role in supporting people on the road to recovery and in helping to stabilize countries and regions. Food is often the single largest need after an emergency strikes, and the largest resource available from donors. Last year alone, for instance, the World Food Programme received nearly $1.7 billion in food aid donations for emergencies and protracted relief and recovery operations. That is part of the $1.9 billion in pledges WFP received last year, which really makes the Programme the largest humanitarian agency in the world.

First and foremost, as I said, food aid saves lives. WFP has been involved in Afghanistan for almost four decades. Last summer we were there fighting the effects of civil war, persistent drought and desperate poverty. We had 3.8 million beneficiaries. We had a vulnerability analysis done last summer, which caused us to raise the number of people in need to 5.5 million. After 11 September, on the basis of United Nations assessments, we added another 2 million people in order to try to accommodate food assistance for a major internal displacement and possible refugee flows.

In that operation, through the generosity of donors, we were able to mobilize $240 million to deliver almost half a million metric tons of food. We are now appealing to donors for food for the rest of the year — also about half a million tons. We have so far received nearly $70 million from the United States. But we are only 22 per cent resourced and we need to continue with a broad range of donors if we are to continue to succeed.

Of course, the major challenge we faced in Afghanistan — which we all saw in the press and elsewhere — was to move food into the country in the middle of a political and military conflict. We were also in a race against the winter and the fact that roads might become impassable. We won the race. After decades of operating in the midst of the civil war, we were able to mobilize quickly. Even at the height of the bombing, on average we had 2,000 trucks of all sizes and shapes on the roads every day, moving in and out of the country. WFP not only met its target for food deliveries into Afghanistan, but by the end of December we had exceeded it by 36 per cent.

Great courage was displayed by our local staff in Afghanistan, as well as by many staff members of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) with whom we partnered. WFP's Afghan guards stayed in the warehouses, and we lost food from only one warehouse in the entire country during the last four months of 2001. We also kept our women's bakeries open in different cities throughout the country. Many NGOs kept up the contributions locally, despite heightened concerns about security. WFP's transport and logistics staff were creative and hardworking. They made the enterprise seem almost easy, even as many were predicting the possibility of mass starvation. We delivered the food and also set up for the United Nations a telecommunications network, which we shared with all United Nations partners. We also took over and expanded airline passenger service.

We raised the question of whether we have reached every pocket where food is needed in Afghanistan. We probably have not, but we now have helicopters going around to different remote locations to try to identify areas where there may be food shortages. But the result of our collective efforts is clear: there was no famine in Afghanistan.

This same story of food aid preventing famine has been repeated over and over again, although it may not be as widely publicized as it was in Afghanistan.

I would like to share with the Council just a few sentiments that have been shared with me by heads of State. The former President of Honduras, Mr. Flores Facussé, told me that, after hurricane Mitch, when his people had no homes, no jobs, no fields and no factories, they knew that there was one thing that they did not have to worry about, because the World Food Programme was there, with food, the day after the floods. In 1994 the Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina told me that food aid kept the people of Sarajevo alive, because, even during the fighting, the sniper fire and everything else that was happening in Sarajevo at that time, flour and wheat went to the bakeries that stayed open in Sarajevo and every citizen was able to receive two loaves of bread every day. Just recently, President Musharraf told me that, without the massive food aid that the World Food Programme distributed in Afghanistan last year, far more people would have had to flee the country as refugees, with all the destabilizing consequences.

Two years ago, when I served as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy in the Horn of Africa, and we mobilized food and other aid in order to try to prevent the famine in that region, Prime Minister Meles, President Moi and others thanked us publicly for the success of that work.

In addition to saving lives, food aid contributes to recovery. It has an economic value in nations recovering from political or economic crisis. It is often preferred to cash, because hyperinflation or lack of markets sometimes makes local currency less than desirable to poor, hungry families. It is no accident that the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Mr. Brahimi, asked WFP to provide food, on a temporary basis, to help pay the salaries of Afghan civil servants. In Sierra Leone, food aid is distributed to former combatants in exchange for the return of weapons. We certainly hope that circumstances in Angola will soon change so that similar programmes can be put in place and so that there can be food in exchange for weapons there.

One of the surest signs in any country that a conflict has ended is when the schools open and where families feel safe sending their children to school. Food aid helps to accomplish that end as well. First, schools

are often built or rebuilt using food-for-work schemes. Secondly, food aid is often used to provide a daily meal at school for each child. This not only helps entice more children to school, but it also helps them to be able to absorb more of their education while they are there. In Afghanistan, our goal, which we will work to reach gradually, is to feed 1 million children at school. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has already told us that school attendance in some areas in Afghanistan is two to three times what we all expected before the school year started last month.

Food aid is also sometimes used as an incentive to get more girls to attend school or to recruit pregnant or lactating mothers to visit health centres. Food aid is especially useful when it is given directly to women. During and after conflicts, women usually carry the largest social burden. They work to keep their families together and to feed their children, often in the absence of their husbands. Getting food to women, who in any event will be the cooks and the people who ensure that the children have access to food, helps to lessen their burden and to empower them to better support their families.

Food-for-work projects, in which we pay people for their labour with food, are today helping to rebuild roads, bridges and irrigation systems in Afghanistan as well as helping with demining projects and the planting of new crops. We use food aid in projects to train women in literacy or basic business concepts so that they can try to earn income to support their families. Council members have probably read about the women's bakeries in Afghanistan to which I referred. These bakeries have been operating for five years; they are the result of the efforts of brave Afghan women who, when the edict came out that women could not work, went to the Taliban authorities and said, "If women can't work, widows will starve. We have a way to keep widows alive, and that is for us to set up bakeries which will be funded by wheat and flour from the World Food Programme and run by women for widows." I am proud to say that those bakeries are still in operation today.

One thing that we try to do, as soon as reconstruction starts in Afghanistan and elsewhere, is to phase out the blanket distribution of free food. We do not want to create dependency; we want to use food aid to contribute to long-term development and reconstruction.

There have been many success stories of food aid being used to help rebuild after a conflict. In Mozambique, for instance, food aid was delivered during the crisis and was used to help create humanitarian corridors. But food aid has also been used, since the end of the conflict, for Mozambique's recovery, to help with food-for-work and other programmes, which I mentioned earlier, for the reconstruction of the country. We have undertaken similar programmes in Central America, Ethiopia and Eritrea, East Timor and many other places.

Such reconstruction also helps support local economies. For instance, almost all of the ground transportation that we use to move food — and we have to use a lot — is hired locally. We use trucks, trains and even donkeys, although I have to say that UNICEF was the first donkey-renter group in the United Nations, in Afghanistan. Last year WFP spent $20 million in Pakistan alone on transportation, hiring commercial truckers. In Ethiopia in the mid-1980s, we set up a trucking network to reach famine victims, and then gave the trucks and their network to Ethiopia. That same network, now in the hands of the private sector, formed the basis of the commercial response to the drought in the Horn of Africa in 2000.

In 1992, we helped combat drought by rebuilding the transport infrastructure through the Beira corridor in southern Africa — the first significant economic cooperation across the border of South Africa — under the old apartheid Government — and its neighbours. In the following year, WFP rebuilt the Georgia-Armenia-Azerbaijan railroad line, donated Russian diesel engines and then moved food through the region. That railroad still operates today and, of course, it is used for commercial purposes throughout the region. With the exception of the World Bank, WFP has also consistently been the largest customer for goods and services in developing countries worldwide within the United Nations system. Our food purchases are usually between $200 million and $300 million in developing countries each year.

Food aid is also a stabilizing factor. It does more than keep people alive and help with reconstruction, even though either of those two goals would be enough on its own. In the past 10 years, food aid has helped stabilize countries and regions in severe crisis. I would like to point to three cases. First, in the case of Somalia in 1992, I remember writing to Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali in November 1992, saying,

"Please help. We have no more options for getting food into Mogadishu, where so many people are starving." We could not help them. Operation Restore Hope, which began in December of that year, helped the World Food Programme, the International Committee of the Red Cross and many others to reach millions of people so as to end the famine. The operation later changed focus, but its original purpose was to allow people to be fed, and in that it certainly succeeded. The insecurity caused by the famine was thus eliminated as an element in the political turmoil.

In 1995, WFP began a small operation in North Korea. There, too, food aid has helped to foster stability and open new lines of communication. By 1997, the programme in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had become the largest WFP programme in the world, and it remains so. Today we are feeding more than 6 million North Korean children — every child in school in the counties to which we have access; that is more than a quarter of the population of the country. All the experts, including those from the Government of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, say that 1997 was the height — or the depth — of the famine in that country. Food aid ended the famine, but it also helped to place the country on a track towards better relations with United Nations agencies and, more important, with its neighbours in the region and with other Governments, many of which have recognized the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in the past two years.

Most recently, in Afghanistan, when the people were looking at the results of years of fighting and drought, many predicted a large famine. In September and early October, others predicted a refugee crisis of mammoth proportions with significant political destabilization in the region. That did not occur, and one main reason was that the people in Afghanistan received food aid. They did not have to abandon their homes to find food in the massive numbers that had been expected.

Food aid keeps people alive, it helps communities reconstruct after a crisis, and it helps bring regional stability. There are still places in the world where people are cut off from food — the UNITA-held territories of Angola, parts of the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo, 43 counties in North Korea. However, where people can be reached, the Security Council, the United Nations and the rest of the international community can be proud that the world has finally come to the point where it will not accept the starvation of people. Because of the generosity of donor Governments, the leadership of the Secretary-General and — trying to be modest, but not succeeding — the efficiency of the World Food Programme, as the largest humanitarian agency, I dare say that major famines are in the past.

Reaching that point has not been easy for the staffs of any humanitarian agency in the world. Collectively, our work is difficult and dangerous, and I would be remiss if I were here with the Council and did not mention the issue of security of staff. Two years ago, the Council was kind enough to invite me to address that issue. Since then the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator has been reinforced, and the hiring of 100 field security officers was most welcome. But I believe that more commitment is still required. General Assembly decisions have said that there would be more security, but that it would not be a priority in the Secretariat budget. I believe that still needs to be addressed.

In addition, it is absolutely clear that some Member States have not done their part. If we look at the issue of the perpetrators of violence against United Nations staff and how few people have been brought to justice, the picture is truly appalling. Member States must do more. We cannot stand by as humanitarian workers are murdered and no one is held accountable. Since 1992, only 15 perpetrators of violent crimes against United Nations staff have been apprehended, although 204 of our colleagues have been killed — murdered.

When I last spoke here, I recalled how an idealistic young Dutch woman, Saskia van Meijenfeldt, who worked for WFP in Burundi, had been shot, along with a UNICEF colleague, execution-style. That sad case remains unresolved, as do more than 188 others. Think of that young woman's family and friends and of so many of the other victims. They deserve more than this neglect.

The tide of humanitarian crises we have seen in the past decade unfortunately shows no sign of abating. A major food emergency is unfolding in southern Africa with the drought, and El Niño is predicted for this year, which could precipitate another destructive cycle of floods and drought. Zimbabwe, once a major food exporter, is now a recipient, and its needs are growing. The needs in Angola and the Democratic

Republic of the Congo will grow when we finally have more access to people in those countries.

Food aid has saved and will save millions of lives. Food aid has played and will play a major role in supporting people on the road to recovery. Food aid helps stabilize countries and regions. Ultimately, food aid, and the humanitarian commitment of every person in the world, has ended famine on this Earth.

Mr. Levitte (France) (*spoke in French*): On the last day of her 10-year term at the head of the World Food Programme (WFP), I should like to express to Catherine Bertini, with respect and admiration, the thanks and congratulations of France. During those 10 years, she has truly transformed WFP. Through her dynamism, personal commitment, generosity and managerial skills, she has made that institution one of the premier agencies in the United Nations family with a considerable and increasing volume of resources. That attests to the strength of her conviction and also, unfortunately, to the needs of the most vulnerable populations.

I am struck to see that today, WFP manages an annual volume of nearly $2 billion, which is more than all the funds of the other United Nations programmes, and approaches those of the World Bank. That is a way to measure her success as well as the needs of the populations about which she came to talk with us. During her 10-year term, she has given WFP a face and a voice — a voice that has been listened to and respected.

She wished to spend some of the last day of her tenure with the Security Council. Some might ask why. Hearing her list the countries where WFP carries out its work, we understand why. That list, unfortunately, comprises precisely those countries whose names appear on the Council's agenda. In that respect, I should like to commend the success of WFP programmes in Afghanistan, in North Korea, which she mentioned, and in the Horn of Africa, where she went several times on missions that have left a lasting impression in the minds of millions and millions of people throughout the world.

She mentioned the issue of staff security. I should like her to know that that is a matter of great importance to the Council. It is a subject that we have dealt with and will continue to address with determination, in liaison with the Secretary-General. France gives unreserved and, I might add, considerable support to WFP programmes. It supports its two priorities: emergency assistance, which she mentioned, and assistance for reconstruction and, more broadly, for development.

I should like to express our unreserved support for the strategic outline that she mentioned earlier. I believe she wanted WFP to strengthen its expertise through a kind of "hunger map" as a way to define food security strategies and better to address a concern we share — crisis prevention. In that respect, we give her our full support.

Finally, I should like to commend something far too rare in our United Nations family: her ability to work in harmony with all the other institutions of the family, as well as with local Governments. Brava, Ms. Bertini.

Mr. Yap (Singapore): We would first like to welcome Ms. Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), to the Security Council and thank her for her comprehensive briefing. We would like to pay our tribute to her for the outstanding achievements that she has made, as so eloquently described by Ambassador Levitte.

WFP operates in most, if not all, the conflict areas dealt with by the Security Council. In many briefings to the Council, we often hear of innovative methods of delivery of food aid by WFP in extremely harsh circumstances. Often, WFP launches emergency operations before the international community is able to grapple with the situation and toils to sustain fragile peace and to support the road to recovery long after the media's short attention span has shifted away. We are pleased to have the opportunity today to convey our gratitude to WFP for keeping the United Nations flag flying.

As one of the few high-level women's appointments in the United Nations system, Ms. Bertini will not only be remembered for the exceptional work she has done in WFP for a decade; she is also an inspiration to women all over the world. She will be sorely missed after her departure. Indeed, WFP is an outstanding example of how such cross-cutting issues as gender can be effectively mainstreamed into operations. By targeting women for distribution of food relief and putting women at the top of its priority lists for its operations, WFP recognizes both the special vulnerability of women and girls and the unique and valuable role that women can play — a dual quality to

which the Security Council itself has attached great importance in its discussions on women and peace and security.

In the case of Afghanistan, WFP continued to operate there even in the darkest days of that country's recent history. Our worst fears of a widespread famine in Afghanistan this winter were averted thanks to the efforts of WFP. This has helped significantly in how the international community's role is perceived in Afghanistan. Although developments in that country have generally been on an upward trend, many daunting challenges remain ahead.

We have two specific questions to pose to Ms. Bertini in this regard. First, the Security Council recently adopted resolution 1401 (2002) to establish the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The integrated and unified structure of UNAMA is very much an innovation. Could Ms. Bertini let us have her views on how WFP fits into such an integrated structure and whether there is anything the Security Council could do to better help such an integration?

Secondly, an important element of resolution 1401 (2002) is its paragraph 4, which notes that recovery and reconstruction assistance will be most effective "where local authorities contribute to the maintenance of a secure environment and demonstrate respect for human rights" and, as such, should be directed to those areas. How does the WFP implement that provision in practice?

Finally, we would like to welcome the appointment of Mr. James Morris as the next Executive Director of WFP. We wish him the best of luck, as he clearly has big shoes to fill.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*spoke in Arabic*): It is indeed a pleasure for me to express our sincere thanks to Ms. Bertini, Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), for her rich and valuable briefing, especially as it crowns her great achievements at the helm of that agency. At the same time, it is my pleasure to wish her a happy and successful life following these achievements, particularly since she is leaving her post with a clear conscience. I greet her and thank her profusely for having devoted a very important part of her life to the service of humanitarian assistance. Is there anything better than fighting hunger and actively helping to feed the hungry in all sorts of circumstances throughout the world? I also offer her my heartfelt gratitude for her tremendous efforts at the head of her agency to fight hunger and the consequences of natural disasters and armed conflict and to ensure stability in post-conflict situations, in accordance with the Programme's principles.

We fully appreciate the assistance given by WFP in the areas of the world that she mentioned in her briefing, be it in Africa, Asia, the Middle East or elsewhere, including Latin America, Honduras, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, the Sudan and many other countries to which she referred.

The very principle of refusing to accept the death by hunger of any human being lies at the heart of human spirit and humanitarian principles, on the basis of which Ms. Bertini has worked in countries of every stripe. I would note in this regard the great services she rendered to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at a time when it was suffering. Assistance was provided to approximately 6 million people there.

Of course, the assistance rendered in Afghanistan, particularly to pregnant women, children and girls, is worthy of every appreciation. Most noteworthy is the essential cooperation with the International Committee of the Red Cross, particularly in overcoming difficulties in delivering food assistance.

In this respect, I wish to point to one region that is going hungry because food assistance cannot reach its inhabitants. I am referring to the occupied Palestinian territories. We call on WFP in its generosity to pay special attention to that problem, because the people there are beginning to suffer and to call for assistance to alleviate the hunger that has already begun to afflict them.

I fully support the reference made by the Ambassador of France to a hunger map and food security strategies. This would indeed be an important gesture and we therefore agree with all the points raised by Ms. Bertini in her briefing.

In conclusion, we wish her every possible happiness and all possible success to her successor. We are sure he will prove worthy of the post.

Ms. Lajous (Mexico) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I wish to thank Ms. Bertini for her briefing and to congratulate her on her praiseworthy work as Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) since 1992.

My country recognizes the important work performed by WFP in more than 80 countries in both providing emergency food and promoting long-term development. Mexico is a founding member of WFP and is currently on its Executive Board. My country has supported the Board's, including those pertaining to the Programme's governing system; its association with other agents of development, particularly civil society organizations; the improvement of staff security in all areas; and the mobilization of resources.

Mexico attaches great importance to the humanitarian assistance provided by United Nations agencies. We think that this humanitarian assistance should be provided on the basis of the guiding principles in the annex to General Assembly resolution 46/182. This important resolution is a standard of basic conduct in showing solidarity and international cooperation.

We reiterate that humanitarian assistance should be provided in accordance with the principles of humanity, neutrality and impartiality. Similarly, they should be granted within the context of full respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and the unity of States in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations and always upon the request or with the consent of the receiving State. States bear the paramount responsibility for initiating, organizing, coordinating and implementing the assistance provided by the international community.

Mexico reiterates in this respect the importance of multilateralism and the non-conditionality of international cooperation as regards emergency food aid.

In the case of armed conflict, food production is traditionally one of the most affected economic sectors. Abandoned fields and migration caused by acts of war have a general impact on the supply of foodstuffs in some areas. The case of Afghanistan, given the tragic nature and complexity of the situation, has become an example of the destructive capacity of human beings, combined with adverse climate conditions. But at the same time, it is an example of the effectiveness of the work coordinated among United Nations agencies and the international community in consolidating lasting peace.

We have all witnessed the efforts of the World Food Programme to gather the necessary assistance and prevent millions of displaced persons and refugees from starving during the past winter, together with the populations who, despite their isolation, felt the effects of war and drought. To the difficult task of collecting foodstuffs is added that of distributing assistance in an area characterized by insecurity and the lack of infrastructure.

Mexico would like to pay tribute to all who have done this altruistic work with dedication to bring relief to the neediest, not only in Afghanistan but in all regions where there is a humanitarian crisis. In this connection, Mexico would like to express its support for the Afghanistan recovery operation to meet the nutritional requirements of the people, support farmers, expand the food programmes in schools and promote the work of reconstructing infrastructure.

I should not like to conclude my statement without explicitly expressing our gratitude to Ms. Bertini for her work, and we wish her good luck in her future. She is one of the women who has reached one of the posts with the broadest responsibility in the United Nations and has demonstrated a thorough sense of leadership and organizational capabilities. Few women can claim this in their professional resume; and for this reason I think that she deserves very special recognition. We will miss her in the United Nations.

Mr. Valdivieso (Colombia) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Colombia would also like to welcome the presence of Ms. Catherine Bertini, the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), and to thank her for her very informative briefing. My delegation would also like to express its heartfelt thanks to her and her co-workers in WFP for the praiseworthy work that that organization has been doing to help millions of people throughout the world.

We would also like to specifically address the contribution that WFP has made to the operations of the international community in Afghanistan and the fact that it is continuing to work in the country to meet the pressing nutritional needs of the population. As we know, WFP is one of the most effective and genuine responses and presents the true face of the United Nations and the international community to the neediest and those with the greatest need, those who lack food. Judging by its results, it should feel very satisfied, and we are very grateful to it. My delegation would thus like to join all those who have expressed their thanks and praise at this meeting.

Having heard Ms. Bertini talk about WFP work in Afghanistan and other conflict situations, we are prompted to ask some questions.

First of all, it seems to us that in the course of recent months in Afghanistan the donor efforts were concentrated primarily on emergency, short-term food aid. Free food for schoolchildren, particularly girls, has been highly beneficial. However, in the long run, there might be the mistaken impression that the reason for studying is to get food for free. The distribution of foodstuffs in urban areas might lead to an exodus of people from the rural areas to the cities, which would have a damaging effect on food production in the country. We would like to know how WFP has planned to meet the long-term requirements to provide and/or produce foodstuffs in Afghanistan.

Secondly, aware that the security conditions in the country and the massive presence of the international community — humanitarian workers, military personnel, representatives of the news media and press and political observers, etc. — will have an impact on the efficiency in distributing foodstuffs, several agencies have complained that the presence of international military staff dressed in civilian clothes may cause confusion among the Afghan population when it comes to distinguishing between humanitarian and military personnel, thereby putting some humanitarian operations at risk. We would like to hear what Ms. Bertini has to say about this, especially since later in her statement she asked for greater efforts and more effective responses in providing protection to workers.

Finally, at the end of her term at the head of the World Food Programme, my delegation wishes to ask Ms. Bertini what lessons she was able to draw with respect to the Organization's interaction and dialogue with armed non-State actors in Afghanistan and other conflict areas to ensure access for humanitarian workers to the most vulnerable sectors in an emergency and to facilitate the distribution of food among those populations. We know that the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, presided over by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, has been debating this issue, and we would like to hear her perspective on the question of food aid.

Finally, I wanted to reiterate my delegation's appreciation and admiration for the work she has accomplished and to wish her much success in her future activities.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): I too would like to thank the Executive Director of the World Food Programme (WFP), Catherine Bertini, for her briefing. I would also like to thank her for the way she has led the World Food Programme to its current position as an indispensable part of the international machinery for emergency assistance and recovery in crisis areas.

Ms. Bertini has in a timely manner reminded us that the role of food aid can go well beyond the most immediate aim of feeding a hungry population. Through innovative means, which WFP has championed for many years, food aid can also become an effective vehicle for a wider set of objectives for conflict prevention and post-conflict recovery. Although not without its limitations, food aid could thus also be seen in the context of meeting basic needs and providing local communities with opportunities to prevent grievances which can fuel conflict and hamper post-conflict reconciliation. The ongoing humanitarian crisis and recovery challenges in Afghanistan are a clear case in point. Norway gives high priority to promoting a wide-ranging reconstruction effort focusing on programmes aimed at filling basic long-term needs for the peaceful transition of Afghan society, notably restarting agriculture and securing long-term food security.

As is clear from Ms. Bertini's briefing, food aid can contribute substantially to that end. The achievements of WFP and of other humanitarian agencies in Afghanistan are impressive. At the same time, a substantial part of that country's population will still require emergency food aid at least until the summer harvest and perhaps beyond. In the longer term, reconstruction efforts must underpin the political process and ensure sustainable development. The food supply system is of direct relevance for Afghanistan's transition to a safe, stable, democratic and eventually prosperous Afghan society. Large-scale investment is urgently needed in the agricultural sector in Afghanistan.

We recognize the need for adequate funding for both short-term recovery and long-term development. As Chair of the Afghanistan Support Group, Norway has consistently urged the donor community to live up to its commitments. We will continue to do so in the future.

Finally, I would like to wish Ms. Bertini success in her future life and thank her for her achievements at WFP.

Mr. Eldon (United Kingdom): Time is short, and I will abbreviate my statement. But there are a few points I would like to make this morning. The first is to say how touched we are that on her final day in office, Ms. Bertini has chosen to come and talk to the Council. During the time that she has been in office, the scale and complexity of humanitarian operations mounted by the United Nations and by others has increased dramatically. Under her leadership, the World Food Programme (WFP) has responded magnificently to that challenge.

On Afghanistan, which is the subject of this briefing today, I want to pay a particular tribute and convey our thanks to WFP and to the other United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, which have all played such a crucial role, together with very many brave local Afghan employees, in ensuring that humanitarian food aid and relief can be and were delivered to those in need. The Secretary-General's report and the figures which Catherine Bertini has quoted to us today are ample testimony to the effectiveness of their efforts.

Ms. Bertini's statement to us today eloquently argued how food aid saves lives, how food aid can contribute to recovery and how it can serve in the longer term as a stabilizing factor. I respect a great deal of her general thinking, but at the same time, I want to caution that we must be very careful in using food aid outside acute emergency situations.

We need to make sure that food and needs are examined on a case-by-case basis. We need to be sure that food is, in fact, the most appropriate and most efficient resource transfer in cases of conflict and beyond the immediate conflict stage. Naturally, in many crisis situations food aid will fit that requirement since needs are so immediate. But we need to recognize also that food aid in conflict situations is highly sensitive and, if misused, can have a direct and immediate effect on the dynamics of violence. Systems must be put in place to minimize food aid diversions. Such diversions, as we have seen already in some conflict situations, as the Council will know, can make conflict even worse, and can exacerbate inequalities in conflict and post-conflict societies where food is used as a resource transfer.

Outside conflict and natural disaster situations, where the imperatives for immediate relief and consumption are much clearer, food aid must be used with the effective local market production incentives kept clearly in mind. And as with any intervention, we must be sure that we monitor its use carefully and thoroughly to be sure that it is being provided to those who need it most and that it is the best solution to the needs of beneficiaries.

Again, as in many other interventions — any other intervention for that matter — the use of food must have a clear exit strategy so that we know when its job is done and how other interventions can be used instead.

I am absolutely sure that WFP will reflect on these points, not least in Afghanistan, where food is going to form part of salary payments for civil servants, and in other countries where the Programme operates. We will continue to support its work in that context. And if time allows, we would be interested to hear from Ms. Bertini how WFP operations will proactively factor these concerns into the Programme's activities both in Afghanistan and in other crisis areas.

I have listened to and sympathized with Ms. Bertini's extremely clear message on security: 188 unsolved cases involving the murder of United Nations humanitarian workers is a scandal. We have made this point in the Council before, and I do not need to labour it now. But I just would like to say that as far as the internal United Nations administration of security issues is concerned, it is important that all the players, and in particular the Office of the United Nations Security Coordinator (UNSECOORD) and the agencies, recognize that their various interests do not constitute a zero-sum game. UNSECOORD has an important coordinating role, which must be respected. The United Kingdom has put its money where its mouth is in supporting that coordinating role. But, of course, we accept that the agencies have their own security needs over and above what UNSECOORD may be able to provide and these needs must clearly be considered too.

Finally, I have been careful in these brief, I hope, remarks to keep to issues that are unarguably part of the Security Council's turf. But as Ms. Bertini made clear, the complex of considerations surrounding food aid is much wider than just that. The Security Council and the Economic and Social Council must both work

towards a closer and more comprehensive understanding of conflict issues and how we as a system can deal with them more effectively. I very much hope that Mrs. Bertini's successor will engage with the Economic and Social Council to take them forward.

The President (*spoke in Russian*): As we agreed, I will now suspend the meeting and we will resume at 3 p.m. This will allow the other members of the Security Council to take the floor and, above all, enable Ms. Bertini to make her concluding remarks and respond to the questions and comments that she will have heard.

The meeting was suspended at 12.50 p.m.